

What should I do if I'm concerned about my child's level of anxiety?

There are two important things to do if you think your child is struggling with anxiety. First, **reassure your child that they are not alone in the struggle and that you are going to help them.**

Second, **contact your child's pediatrician, school social worker, or therapist and let her know about your concerns.** There are many options for help, and each can be tailored to fit best for your child and your family. There are also daily things you can do at home to help your child manage his or her anxiety, including:

- Pay attention to your child's feelings.
- Stay calm when your child becomes anxious about a situation or event.
- Don't punish mistakes or lack of progress.
- Be flexible, but try to maintain a normal routine.
- Modify expectations during stressful periods.

Online Resources

- **American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry**
 - www.aacap.org
- **Anxiety and Depression Association of America**
 - www.adaa.org
- **How to Choose a Therapist for Your Child**
 - www.effectivechildtherapy.org/content/how-choose-child-therapist

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Anxiety in Children



RECOGNIZING WARNING SIGNS & FINDING SOLUTIONS

What are typical childhood anxieties?

Certain fears occur at certain ages and are simply phases in childhood. For example, infants and toddlers have a **fear of strangers**. 3-5 year olds have imaginations that are growing and thriving and therefore they develop fears of **ghosts, monsters and the dark**. School aged children worry about **school performance, social pressure, or real world dangers**. When anxiety is just a phase, these fears and concerns are more reasonable.

When a child's anxiety is easily managed and the child recovers quickly, chances are, this anxiety won't last long. However, some anxieties persist, become more intense, and don't fit into the "age-appropriate" mold.

What are red flags I should look out for?

- **Your child worries more days than not, and this has been happening for several months.** Their worries are out of proportion to the actual threat or danger of the situation. For example, they may worry about war, finances, death, or their health every day even though there's no immediate reason for them to.
- **You have tried to help your child control their worry, and this has not been successful.** Reason and logic don't seem to make a difference to them or help them stop worrying.
- **Your child is experiencing physical symptoms such as headaches, stomachaches, nausea, restlessness, tiredness, or muscle tension.** They may frequently be too sick to go to school. When a child is experiencing anxiety, their body becomes tense and vigilant because it is constantly preparing for future danger. Experiencing this daily can cause a lot of bodily aches and pains.
- **Your child has started having difficulty concentrating because they can't stop worrying.** Kids with anxiety are sometimes misdiagnosed as having an attention-related disorder because of this. For example, your child may be so stressed about what grade they are going to get on a test that they can't focus enough on the test to answer the questions correctly.
- **Your child is very self-critical.** They may have exceptionally high standards for themselves that would be difficult for anyone to meet.
- **Your child is having trouble sleeping.** They may have difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or have frequent nightmares. Usually they are either worrying about things or they feel like their brain "can't turn off" enough to fall asleep.
- **Your child avoids many activities they used to enjoy due to worrying.** They may not want to go to friend's houses or go to a new place.
- **Your child cries or becomes angry very easily in stressful situations or when worrying about the future.**
- **These worries are causing your child difficulty in their daily life.** For example, their friends may not want to spend time with them anymore due to their excessive worrying. Their grades may be slipping due to worrying during class or stressing about their performance.

Information gathered from the public works of Dr. Kristi Wolfe and Erin Pridgen, M.S